

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

Summary of the Office Action

Claims 1, 5, 6 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Hofstetter et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,136,623) in view of *Kadah* (U.S. Patent No. 5,699,218) and *Hatakoshi et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,400,742).

Claims 2-4 and 11-16 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Summary of the Response to the Office Action

Applicants propose to cancel claims 1, 5, 6-10, and 17 without prejudice or disclaimer by this amendment. Applicants also propose to rewrite claim 2 in independent form. Upon entry of this paper, claims 2-4 and 11-16 will be pending.

The Disposition of the Claims

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication that claims 2-4 and 11-16 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, Applicants propose to cancel claims 1, 5, 6-10, and 17 without prejudice or disclaimer and to rewrite claim 2 in independent form by this amendment. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

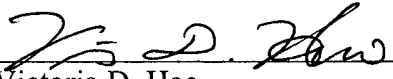
In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request the entry of this Amendment to place the application in clear condition for allowance or, in alternative, in better form for appeal. Applicants also respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of the application and the timely allowance of the pending claims. Should there remain any questions or comments regarding this response or the application in general, the Examiner is urged to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

If there are any other fees due in connection with the filing of this response, please charge the fees to our Deposit Account No. 50-0310. If a fee is required for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 not accounted for above, such extension is requested and the fee should also be charged to our Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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